

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 10, 2014

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

On October 23, 2014, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Janet Barresi, on behalf of the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE), submitted an updated request to the United States Department of Education (ED) to grant a one-year extension of Oklahoma's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility, so that Oklahoma can continue to implement ESEA Flexibility principles as outlined in the Flexibility Request.

On behalf of the State, we request that Oklahoma's Flexibility Waiver be reinstated immediately in order to avoid the costly and unnecessary transition back to the strict requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Requiring school districts to "flip -flop" back and forth from the Flexibility Waiver to the requirements of NCLB, then back to the Flexibility Waiver next year, would create havoc for the districts and school sites across Oklahoma. Additionally, the immediate approval of Oklahoma's request will provide stability to Oklahoma school districts by ensuring there are no disruptions in the support services and technical assistance provided by the OSDE.

As you know, on August 28, 2014, the State of Oklahoma's request to obtain a one-year extension of the Flexibility Waiver was denied because ED determined that the State could no longer demonstrate that it had college- and career-ready subject matter standards. On October 16, 2014, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education concluded its review of Oklahoma's subject matter standards, the Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS), and determined the standards to be college- and career-ready. The Regents' determination allows Oklahoma to elect Option B, of Principle 1, relating to college- and career-ready expectations for all students.

In the State's extension request letter dated August 8, 2014, Superintendent Barresi provided evidence of Oklahoma's accomplishments made possible by the Flexibility Waiver. Under flexibility from NCLB, OSDE has demonstrated convergence of priorities and reforms by breaking down the silos of educational programs based solely on funding streams. This convergence of work has allowed OSDE to lead change in Oklahoma public schools through strategies focused on improving school- and district-based leadership, culture, instruction and

data usage. Since original application for Flexibility in 2011, Oklahoma has demonstrated a commitment to the Four Principles of Flexibility:

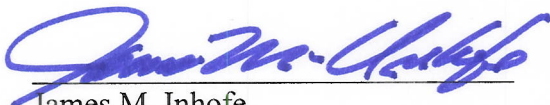
- Principle 1: College- and Career-Ready Expectations for All Students
- Principle 2: State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support
- Principle 3: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership
- Principle 4: Reduce Duplication and Unnecessary Burden on LEAs and Schools

Immediate action on Oklahoma's request to reinstate provisions of the Flexibility Waiver will allow Oklahoma to continue providing services that are positively impacting academic achievement in our State. Additionally, the OSDE's Office of School Turnaround has performed extensive work on behalf of priority and focus schools. Oklahoma is realizing positive results and systemic changes in school districts. To revert to the antiquated, inflexible system of accountability established by NCLB will do irreparable harm to school districts that have shown tremendous improvement.

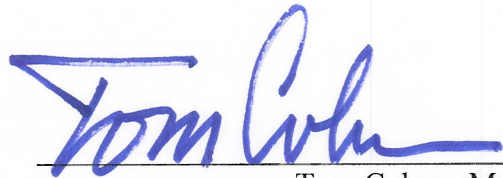
On behalf of the State, we request that Oklahoma be granted immediate ESEA Flexibility in order to avoid the costly implementation of NCLB requirements and to clarify the accountability system under which schools are operating. Immediate action on Oklahoma's Flexibility Request will provide stability and allow the OSDE to remain as a service agency and support system – as opposed to a regulatory and compliance agency – for those districts in the State that need technical assistance, guidance, leadership and capacity to meet the high expectations for each child.

On behalf of our constituents, we ask that you act immediately with regard to Oklahoma's Flexibility Waiver request. We understand that flexibility is vital to the continuous improvement of Oklahoma's schools. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



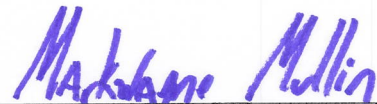
James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



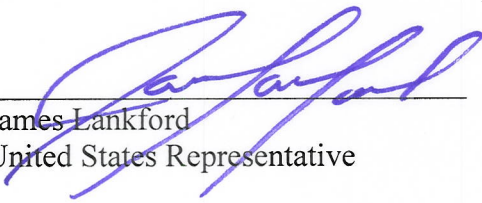
Tom Coburn M.D.
United States Senator



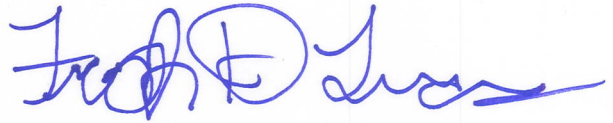
Tom Cole
United States Representative



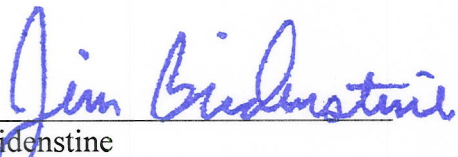
Markwayne Mullin
United States Representative



James Lankford
United States Representative



Frank Lucas
United States Representative



Jim Bridenstine
United States Representative